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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an Otterbein College (Ohio) master's degree program which is designed to provide an alternative route to teacher certification for individuals who have earned a baccalaureate degree and have later decided to become teachers. Three features make this program unique: (1) with the exception of the full-time, 16-week teaching internship, it is a part-time program designed to accommodate the working adult; (2) the liberal arts theme is the focus of the curriculum; and (3) course content is creatively matched with field and clinical experiences. A brief description is given of each of the nine required courses. The clinical component of each course is outlined. (IAH)

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Restructuring Teacher Education For Career Switchers

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Restructuring Teacher Education for Career Switchers

The restructuring of teacher education is riding yet another wave (Zeichner and Liston,1990). The new wave is a surge of non-traditional students who want to enter the teaching profession through an alternative route. Lately the most dramatic increase in student enrollment on college campuses is the pool of non-traditional students entering teacher education (Viadero, 1990). Previously career switching in education referred to teachers leaving the profession--today it refers to people entering the profession (Freidus, 1990). At Otterbein College, the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program for these career switchers was designed to meet adult needs and experiences. These adult needs and experiences were matched with the State of Ohio certification requirements and the national restructuring issues in teacher education. Adult needs and experiences have continued to be utilized in planning, implementing, and evaluating the program.

Setting and Program

Otterbein was founded in 1847 as a liberal arts college whose dual mission was to prepare teachers and preachers. It is located in Westerville, Ohio, just off the outerbelt of Columbus, the largest city and capital of the state. Metropolitan Columbus is a fast growing area with an unusually stable economy. In addition to insurance, research, banking, and government, service and education are the major employers. The MAT student population reflects this variety. It is interesting to note that many of these employers offer tuition reimbursement and many of the MAT students take advantage of this financial support from their employers.

Historically Otterbein has served and led the traditional aged student. However, over the past ten years the non-traditional population has grown considerably. Today, of the 2200 students at Otterbein, 800 are non-traditional students. These adults have been welcomed and have become a notable force on campus.

During these same recent ten years, the notion of alternative teacher certification routes was gaining prominence and significance both locally and nationally. Since Otterbein had proven itself as an adult education institute (Fayne and Woodson 1990) and since the need to restructure teacher education had gained respectful significance, it seemed only natural to initiate a Master of Arts in Teaching program for career switchers at Otterbein.

"It is never too late to make a career move if the desire is there. You [the Intern] have shown me that there are people [the Otterbein staff] available and willing to help people make a transition." (Cooperating Teacher)

The idea of the program was conceived and developed during 1987. The required external evaluations were completed by the State Department, the Ohio Board of Regents, and North Central during 1988.

"When I heard Otterbein had received over 50 telephone inquiries before the MAT program had been approved, it was easy to give the program my endorsement." (Evaluation Team Member, Ohio Board of Regents.)

The first courses were held during Winter term, 1989. There were 16 students enrolled the first quarter; presently there over 40 students regularly attending; and, by Spring, 1991, three of the original 16 will graduate.

The program is designed to provide an alternative route to teacher certification for an individual who has earned a baccalaureate degree and has then decided to become a teacher. Quoted below are some reasons why these adults want to explore a teaching career.

"A love for kids and the life of ideas are more appealing than material pursuits; I also believe that I can make a difference in kids' lives (idealism)." (Aspiring MAT Student)

"I view learning as a "discovery process". I really enjoy seeing the "light in peoples' faces" when they discover new insight that I've helped to facilitate." (Aspiring MAT student)

"I have received many gifts: love, nurturing, literature, knowledge, and a passion for learning. I want to start giving these gifts away so that I may keep them." (Aspiring MAT Student)

There are three features which make the MAT program unique. The first feature is the program is part-time. The working adult is accommodated through scheduling the courses in the evenings and on the week-ends. The only exception to this part-time arrangement is the Teaching Internship which is a 16 week full-time commitment and comes at the end of the program. This part-time arrangement gives the career switcher an opportunity to "try-on" teaching a little bit at a time. Taking one course at a time also provides the MAT student an opportunity to focus, reflect, and introspect in small increments. The second feature that contributes to Otterbein's uniqueness is the liberal arts theme. To promote the liberal arts ideal, the core course, entitled "Liberal Arts and Philosophies of Education", focuses on liberal arts as the core to education. The course is taught by a non-Education faculty member, a Philosophy professor. Also, the liberal arts theme is reinforced with the grouping of students for classes. The students are heterogeneously grouped by area of certification in classes and bring each of their liberal arts regularly into the discussion. The third feature that contributes to the uniqueness is the creative matching of the course content with field and clinical experiences.

Field and Clinical Component

In keeping with John Dewey's (1904) and B. O. Smith's (1980) notion that learning to teach is best accomplished in the real world, this pre-service

candidate experiences a variety of perspectives in the real world of schools. Since these career switchers are on the job during school hours it is necessary to provide them with creative, real world field and clinical placements.

In concert with the coursework are those complementary field and clinical activities. Ohio regulations require 300 hours of field and/or clinical experiences before Student Teaching which is also a full 300 hour, full-time field requirement. Of the 300 field and/or clinical hours, 120 are dispersed throughout the pre-professional teacher education coursework. "Field" experiences, simply distinguished from "clinical" experiences, are those which take place in the schools and "clinical" experiences are controlled experiences which occur in the college classroom or in a clinical setting.

The basic coursework includes the following required nine courses: Liberal Arts and Philosophies of Education, Educational Psychology, Current Issues in Education, Multicultural Education, Understanding Exceptional Children, Instructional Media and Technology, Curriculum, Methods, and the Internship. Each course, with the exception of Liberal Arts and Philosophies of Education and the Internship which is exclusively a field-based course, has both a classroom and a related field and/or clinical requirement.

Educational Psychology concentrates on the "school-aged learner in a school setting" and has a twenty-five hour field/clinical requirement. The majority of the field hours are spent tutoring an individual school-aged pupil in a school contiguous to the MAT students' places of employment. The students are placed in schools close to their workplace to enable them the opportunity to tutor over their lunch hours. Related, but limited, observations occur with this placement. A clinical activity connected with this course centers on Piagetian tasks. The MAT students bring their own children and/or siblings (age 6 months through 17 years) to class to participate as subjects in a series and variety of Piagetian tasks.

"My second grader really liked coming to MY school . . . I couldn't believe how the experiments work. I have become a believer in cognitive development." (MAT Student)

Current Issues is open to both MAT students and the Master of Education (MAE) students (i. e., practicing teachers seeking an advanced

degree). The course focuses on current issues, the forces effecting schooling and education, and models of thinking about schooling. The student examines national, state, local and individual interests. The format is predominantly large group and small group discussion. The mix of students' perspectives is wholesome, worthwhile, realistic, and challenging. Sometimes chaos occurs when the MAT students offer the "outsiders' " perspective and the teachers reacted with reality and analysis. The evaluation enables all to grow. Elementary and high school pupils, classroom teachers, administrators, school board members, community and business leaders are invited to attend class sessions and interact with members to test and tease the MAT students' developing perspectives on current issues. Finally the students are asked to reflect , refine and synthesis their conversations and readings. The clinical component consists of panel discussions by the above mentioned visitors and attendance at a local School Board Meeting.

"I read what the experts said and I read what the commissioned boards reported and I found the ideas worthwhile until I came to class. The teachers had another view. It was then I realized the complicated nature of schooling. Reading the experts' reviews of schools was one thing but listening to the teachers talk about schools was something else altogether." (MAT Student)

"The best part of the MAT program was the opportunity to be in classes with the practicing teachers." (MAT Intern)

The basis of the **Multicultural Education** course is the identification of the MAT students' learning styles and cultural backgrounds. After distinguishing their own learning styles (through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and their own cultural background (through a micro-cultural activity from Gollnick and Chinn, 1990), the MAT students examine and study a self-selected diverse population not necessarily directly related to schools. Some examples of these populations have been: women and children in a shelter for domestic violence, homosexuals, homeless, and ethnical and religious groups. This is a 25 hour clinical experience.

"I couldn't believe those kids had to go to school the next day."

(MAT Student, participating in experiences at the shelter for domestic violence)

The course, **Understanding Exceptional Children**, is taught "on site" at the county's Special Education Regional Resource Center. Every class is enriched with a clinical experience. These experiences range from a physical handicapped simulation to reading IEPs written for special students. In addition to these clinical experiences, they are required to spent five hours in a K-12 public school observing special students mainstreamed classes. The MAT students earn 25 clinical hours for this course.

"After trying to negotiate a wheel chair, I realize how hard it is to maneuver one in a classroom. What a job!" (MAT Student)

For the **Curriculum** course each MAT student was paired with a "teaching buddy", that is an expert teacher who was working in a position they coveted. A structured telephone interview and a related observation take place. During this field experience the student is required to examine lesson plans, courses of study and curriculum materials.

A teacher must be a decision maker -- how do you know what materials to choose? I didn't realize teaching took so much planning." (MAT Student)

The **Teaching Strategies and Methods** course has both a clinical and field component. In collaboration with the nearby school district, the MAT secondary to-be teachers teach pupils assigned to "Saturday School". These pupils are required to attend "Saturday School" because of disciplinary or procedural infractions during the school week. The situation allows the MAT students to experience a simulated classroom in a real world environment. Classes of 15 to 25 volunteer pupils allowed the intern to teach a lesson, where at least two of their peers observed and provided feedback. The Saturday experience provides for peer observation, an opportunity to evaluate the act of teaching, and one-to-one tutoring.

"I like Saturday School. It gave me a real opportunity to teach. The teaching opportunities were well guided. Saturday School was an excellent idea. It was beneficial to try teaching and also to watch my peers teach the same students." (MAT Student)

The MAT elementary to-be teachers did not have the Saturday experience. However, the elementary and secondary populations practiced teaching with the following clinical activities: Microteaching (Allen and Ryan, 1969), Reflective Teaching (Cruickshank, 1981), peer teaching, peer coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1988), "expert" teacher panels, and simulated conferences with parents, with administrators, and with pupils (Heck, 1982).

"I liked the Microteaching but it was too contrived. I can't wait 'til the real thing." (MAT Student)

The culminating field experience for the MAT student is a sixteen week **Teaching Internship** which consists of: directed observation, reflection, feedback, student teaching, and an Action Research project. It also consists of two diverse teaching placements, one a urban and the other a suburban, with one being a middle school and the second being either a high school or elementary school (according to certification desired.)

"The Internship provided opportunities for growth as a beginning teacher." (MAT Intern)

"I liked the opportunity to work with two different populations of students." (MAT Intern)

"I like the individual support given to the Interns." (MAT Intern)

The capstone experience of the Internship, built on the theme "teacher as researcher", is the development of an Action Research project based upon the Intern's experience in the schools. The Intern identifies a concern/problem that she or he has observed in the classroom and then proceeds through a systematic investigation exploring resolutions to the defined problem.

Evaluation

The program is evaluated through a participant-driven assessment schema. Essential to the maintenance and growth of the MAT program is a systematic, on-going evaluation plan based upon regular input from the MAT students, participating school personnel, and the Otterbein faculty. Bi-directional summative evaluations are solicited from the students at the end of the Internship and after one year of teaching. The Interns respond first to the essentialness of a particular competency area and, second, to their proficiency regarding the particular competency area. These competency areas were identified by the MAT faculty as essential competencies expected from graduates of the program. Formative evaluation includes regular and repeated course and program evaluation. Students serve on a program evaluation team, the Graduate Student Advisory Committee, which offers direct input into the program.

Some benefits are enumerated from these evaluations follow:

"Students are well prepared theoretically. Students have prior classroom experience. Otterbein provides positive support and resources." (Cooperating Teacher)

"I got a chance to successfully supervise a student teacher." (Cooperating Teacher)

"I learned as much from Jan as she did from me. She has a rich background." (Cooperating Teacher)

"Jan was well prepared by both life experiences and Otterbein method courses." (Cooperating Teacher)

"I was able to work with an individual who is enthusiastic and eager about teaching." (Cooperating Teacher)

Some problems and concerns also surfaced from the program evaluations.

"There is too much paperwork. Seven weeks of teaching are too short." (Cooperating Teacher)

"We need more interaction with other student teachers [Interns]." (MAT Intern)

"The Interns need help understanding the phenomena of coaching/supervising role for the improvement of teaching." (Supervisor)

Conclusion

Although this program is in its initial implementation program, the enrollment speaks for the need and validity of this program. Since Winter Quarter, 1989, until the first graduate, Spring Quarter, 19991, enrollment has doubled.

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